

INTERVIEWEE: JOHN KENNEDY

INTERVIEWER: Patricia Young

SUBJECT:

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TRANSCRIBER: Linda A. Jantzen

PY: This is an interview with John Kennedy for the Historical Society of Palm Desert Oral History Project on Friday, April 10, 1980, at ten-thirty in the morning at the Historical Society office in Palm Desert.

Let's start first talking about how you happened to come to Palm Desert.

JK: Okay. First of all, I knew the Kennebeck family out of Omaha, Nebraska, because I went to university with Faye's daughter at Crayton and we graduated together. And my best buddy married her. So we've been involved for years. And after I came back from Scotland, where I did my post graduate work, Faye came back once, her son came back twice to see me to try and talk me into the idea of starting a travel agency, which I honestly was not interested in because I was now administrative

engineer with Cessna Aircraft Corporation at the time. But after the third visit from them, I decided to pay California a visit once again and see what the potential might be. So I arrived in Los Angeles where they lived in the Brentwood area in early October of 1956. And because John was at that particular time employed by United Airlines, actually the idea of the travel agency was to be a partnership with him, and him alone. Not with Faye involved. And he wanted to locate in Pacific Palisades. And, of course, had done no prior investigation as to what it required to start a travel agency. So I began each day going out, I started out in the downtown Los Angeles area and seen all the airline and steamship companies and found out there were many restrictions and rules and regulations. And for the ensuing then probably eight weeks I traveled, not only all over the Los Angeles area, but also as far north as Santa Barbara and as far south as San Diego trying to find a location because the restriction was you had to be at least five miles from a competing office. You had to be sponsored by an airline. You could not be any direct, you could not compete with anybody already in the business. And you had to have had, or you were

supposed to have had some kind of a background in the business. So after going up and down the coast during this period of time and I began to get a little antsy about the whole **situation**, didn't think it had really that much potential. I decided through the holidays coming that I would fly back to Wichita where my family lived, and discuss it with them before I made any decision. Then come back out here and probably just pack up and drive back and return to my job, you know, as engineer. However, in so doing there was another friend, really my closest buddy that I'd gone to university with who was just involved with a brand new private school here in Palm Springs called Palm Valley, just getting started. So one weekend I came down to spend a weekend here and to discuss with, oh, just to see him and to discuss the circumstance and everything. And while we were in Palm Springs one night, he said, "Well, why don't you go to Palm Desert because I'm sure there's no travel agency down there. And I said, "Well, where's Palm Desert?" He said, "Well, tomorrow morning," he said, "just follow Highway 111," and he said, "it's about eleven miles down the road." So on this particular winter morning, it was just magnificent, I drove to Palm

Desert. And I guess I passed all the way through it and didn't realize that I had gone through it. And I came back and pulled into a little tiny Standard Service Station and I remember asking the young fellow, "Can you tell me where Palm Desert is?" And he said, "This is it." His name was Vern Emery, by the way. And I said, "This is it? That's all there is?" And the little station was adjacent to where Ed Mullens had his pharmacy, but Ed Mullens' pharmacy in this day was just one part of a small building area in which he had a little soda fountain where he served sandwiches, you know, for the people who are having to grab a bite to eat, you know, during the lunch hour. And immediately in back of this filling station were two buildings that were built by Mrs. Hanson and her husband Bob. And in this particular little, they called them the Patio Shops in those days, and so I said to Vern, "Well, do you know if there's any shops available for a lease down here." And he said, "Well, I don't know." He said, "There's not too many people want to locate here in Palm Desert just yet." You know, because we, really, now I'm not kidding you, there were probably less than three hundred people in the whole community at this particular time. So I went

around in back of the station, parked the car, and went into this little, it was a little patio five-and-dime store. It was owned and run by Alice Perry White. And she also freelanced in real estate. So went in to see Alice and I explained to her why I was there. And like I say it was a day that you couldn't, it was so magnificent I couldn't believe it. I thought, "Well, even though, you know, it's in the boondocks, it might have some potential." And I was actually after going as far north, as I said, to Santa Barbara and, you know, a lot of those little towns and north of Los Angeles and south, I thought, "Well, this is really ideal." So I asked about the possibility of locating in the area. And she said, "Well, I don't think that there's anything really available. Why don't you talk to this man here." And so she introduced me to Cliff Henderson. And that was within, you know, ten minutes after I'd been in Palm Desert. So I met Cliff and he says, "Well, oh," he said, he just got so excited, "We need a travel agency down here, oh, real badly. It would be just ideal." He says, "That way then that would be a new addition." And he said, "Now I don't have anything available in my shopping center, you know, for you, but I'll build you an office."

And I said, "You will?" And he said, "Yes," and he says, "Why don't you come with me right now and I'll take you over to my little shopping center." Well, I went over to take a look at it, and it was actually where, well, you know when you come off San Pablo, they just tore it down about two or three years ago, it was the junkiest looking place you ever saw in your life. Cliff had put together all kind of old Army barracks that he just picked up for nothing and put a roof on them. And they had three palm trees there and they looked like a big wind would blow them down. And I thought, "Well, for pete's sake," because the little patio shops in those days that Mrs. Hanson built were far nicer. They were attractive. Now I'm going back a long time ago. So I thanked him, I'd let him know. And he said, "Well, now all you have to do is just get in touch," he says, "and I'll build you a building." What he meant really was he'd move in another building, I'm sure. So I went back over to see Alice, and she in turn had talked to Edith Eddy Ward. And right across from her front door, there was a little divider where there were cactus planted. There was this other building, you know, where the electric company and Edith Eddy Ward had a lady by the

name of Vera Gordon sitting in there. She was a real estate lady. And a gal by the name of Eloise Venimann, who had a little tiny, her shop was no bigger than this room, a little furniture store which had, I don't want to say rot iron furniture, but it was metal furniture, which wasn't attractive at all. And there had been at one time in the place where Vera was sitting a paint store run by the Osler family, and they had left a counter back there. And then adjacent to, continuing on down adjacent to where Eloise Venimann had her little furniture store, was our library. And then a new little barber shop going in, and then Dr. Seals was one of our doctors here at the time. So I liked the idea and the counter, and I asked her if there was any possibility of leasing, and she said, "Well, yes," she thought they could sub-lease that back there because they weren't using it, you know. And I said, "Well, first of all I've got to talk to my partner and I don't know whether he'd really want to come down to the desert." I was sold on it. But I said, "I'll be back in a few days," and I got her card. And I took off, went back into Los Angeles, and I told John about it, you know. And, of course, he was still working at United Airlines and so he said, well, he was

going to be off the following Tuesday or something and we'd drive down. So his mother came with us. And it was another one of those magnificent days. This was real early then. This was after the first of the year by now. It was 1957. And so we looked around the area and then John said, you know, I used to come down here with a buddy of his, and they used to stay at a motel across the street from where Peggy's Beauty Salon is right now. It was run by Louise Slater and her family, the Major, and he had a liquor store here in town. And so he'd been in Palm Desert before, but it really was the end of the world. I mean, there was nothing down here to really stimulate you, you know, to stay. Oh, excuse me, I'll go back, Alice Perry White that particular day really encouraged me to come down, I guess for a number of reasons. First of all, they needed new young blood. Most of the people in business were much older. Most of the people who lived here were old. This was a retirement community. I mean, really retired. And she also told me, she said, "Well, this is going to be the greatest place, you know, to locate in because, as you know, most of the property down here has been bought up by the Firestones, the Duponts, and the Rockerfellers."

Well, I was very impressed, you know. I thought if they're getting involved down here, this would be a good place to locate. Well, on this particular day when Faye and her son John came back down, well, they also fell in love with it. And they knew it would be a real gamble. And we also discovered that there were only two airlines in the area. One was Western Airlines in Palm Springs, and the other was an airline called Bonanza that operated out of Thermal, California, which was seventeen miles in the other direction. But we went over to see Vera once again, and she had come up with a price and they would sublease the back part of the office to us for twenty-five dollars a month. Well, that was okay, you know. So we decided to go ahead then and locate. And I in turn would come down and set the office up. And so we gave them a first and last months' check of fifty dollars and went back into L. A. And that night I packed up and came down the next day and spent the next six weeks here by myself setting up the office, you know. Well, I anticipated, you know, I mean, since I had quit my job at Cessna and had a good salary, I anticipated that John would probably do the same, you know, with United Airlines. But he had bought a new

Thunderbird and he had payments to make and everything. And it was then approached by Faye and her son that she would take over the son's interest, you know, and come down here until we were established because she would like to get away from Los Angeles. And take his interest until such part as we got the business going and established, you know. And that way then it would still be a partnership, but this would be a three-way partnership and she would bow out once it got going. And she really, like I say, she's one great lady. And she is the only one that had any background at all in travel because she had worked at a travel agency in Omaha, Nebraska. She didn't have to, she just did it for something to do because she was a widow and she was very solvent. Well, anyway, then she and John began to come down and eventually she took an apartment, I think at Del Lingo Lodge. And we then opened up on March, let's say around March the fifteenth, 1957, and sent out notices to all the airlines, steamship companies that we were in business in Palm Desert. Oh, it was Faye that came up with the name Air, Land, Sea. She had thought this up years ago, and I mean we used to pronounce it Airlansea Travel Service. I still think it's probably

one of the most clever names for an agency. And we each put in X number of dollars and signed an agreement that none of us would take any money out of the business for two years. Which meant, you know, that as I would be down here all the time and they would come down for one or two days a week except when Faye moved down and she was here during March, April, early May, and then she took off and didn't come back until October. Then I was running the business, you know. Well, then you could imagine we had so little in the way of clientele, and we did a certain amount of advertising. And all the letters that we sent out to the various airlines and steamship companies, most of them came back and said, "Where is Palm Desert?" They couldn't even find it on the map. And that's, you know, incredible. So we would tell them where we were located. And shortly a gentleman showed up, Mr. Bob Busso, from Bonanza Airlines and said that he welcomed us to the desert. And we were unaware at the time that the agency in Palm Springs refused to represent Bonanza because they were too far away, you know. Think about trying to sell tickets out of Palm Springs to go to Thermal to take a flight to L. A. So they wanted to sponsor us. And we were delighted.

So we had to get all the data, you know, together for the sponsorship, and that took the better part of probably a month. And then it was submitted to the Air Traffic Conference, and within six months we had our ATC appointment. And that was a real boon because by this time it was September, and I had struggled through the summer months by taking two or three other jobs on the side to keep myself solvent at this time because there was no business. But a few marvelous things did happen and I'll tell you these little vignettes and you can take them for what they are. I was sitting in the office this one, I'd probably been in business let's guess maybe three weeks and nobody was showing up and the phone never rang. And I was teaching myself how to become a travel agent because there was no schools or anything. And there was a manual, how to write an airline ticket, how to do this, you know, that sort of stuff. My family thought I had lost my mind, but I was doing something. It was my first business venture. I had never, my whole life has been oriented toward the sciences and I felt, well, if anybody can do it with any intelligence, at least I should at least make a stab at it. So I was sitting in the office this one nice morning,

and an old blue Dodge drove up in front of the office. And Vera wasn't there, and Eloise wasn't there. An old bald-headed man stuck his head in the window and he says, "Is there a travel agent around here?" And I said, "Oh, yes, sir, here I am," you know. Oh, we had decorated the counter, and I'd brought a typewriter with me out from my home, so we had a typewriter and a small desk and a couple of chairs, you know, and I did have all kind of, in those days they didn't have the OAG, the Official Airline Guide. Every airline had their schedule. And so actually I concentrated solely on Bonanza and Western Airlines because they were the only two here in the area. And so he said that he'd like to go to Elko, Nevada. And I thought, "Where in the hell is Elko, Nevada?" So I said, "Certainly, sir," I said, "We have a direct flight every day," and we did have. Western Airlines, up until a few years ago had a flight every day that originated in San Diego, stopped in Palm Springs, go to Las Vegas, turn around and come back to Palm Springs, back to San Diego. It was a marvelous flight. So I pulled out the daily morning flight from Palm Springs to Las Vegas, and I can probably get you a connection out of Las Vegas for Elko. And I didn't have a clue as to where Elko was.

And so he said, "Fine," he'd like to go on Thursday, so I made a call to Western Airlines and told them what the client required. And they said, "Well, there is no air service to Elko, Nevada." And I said, "Well, how would he get there?" And then they said, "Well, the only way would be by private charter, char^{er}ing a private plane. And I told him. And he said, "Well, yes, that's all right." He's done that before. And so I said he'd like to go on Thursday, and he said, "Well, you know, it costs quite a bit to charter a plane. What's your client's name?" So I asked him, he told me his name was Crosby. And I said, "Your first name?" He said, "H. L. Crosby." So I told him. He said, "Well, now, we'll call you back in about five minutes as soon as we check the charter out. And I thanked the guy at Western and hung up. And I said to Mr. Crosby, "They'll call back, you know, in about five minutes." And we were just sitting there, and I said, "You know, Crosby is really quite a famous name. By any chance are you related to Bing Crosby?" And he looked at me and he said, "Son, how long have you been in business?" And I said, "Three weeks." And he said, "I am Bing Crosby." Well, I was never so embarrassed in my life. But he was bald-headed and he

wore these old clothes, pulled up in an old blue Dodge. So he wanted to know my background and I told him, you know. And he just thought it was incredible that I would go off on a tangent like this. I said, "Well, so does my family," but I said, "I also believe nothing ventured, nothing gained, and if you're going to try something at least . . . " But he said, "Why Palm Desert?" And I said, "I love the area." There were so few people and every person that I met were so friendly and the climate was just beautiful. This was before it turned hot that first summer. And I was even unfamiliar with desert coolers. I mean we hadn't had our warm weather yet. We hadn't had the swamp cooler on in the office, so it was still lovely. Anyway, he said, "Well, if everything goes okay," he said, "I'll see to it that you have my business." Well, it went beautiful. And to make a long story real short, then down through the years he was one of our better clients and he turned over the travel of his four sons and the manager and everything to our office that we handled all the time, even though we still had difficulty getting tickets to them and stuff, we still were able to do it. Anyway, that was one of the first persons that really began to get interested in what we were doing.

And at this particular time the Shadow Mountain Club was the focus of all the activity here in the desert, and there wasn't a person, you know, that came into the office that didn't say, well, now we'll see you at the club tonight or tomorrow. Well, I didn't belong there, but they would give you, you know, a card to come in for a couple of free visits. But I usually ended up going up with somebody else, you know, as their guest, which turned out because they really, it was such a small community they wanted to include you in almost everything they did. And it was actually during that first summer also, I mean, when everybody, right after Easter, everybody would just take off. And the only people that were down here were those that had to be here and couldn't go elsewhere. And so there was really no business for anyone except possibly Ed Mullens who had, who tripped along you might say. Most of the places were closed up for two or three months. And so during that first summer, aside from Olga, who had a little tiny place called Besa Me Mucho. You may have heard of that. Maybe people have told you. Where we could go down at night^{time} and get a taco or something. We would have to go all the way into Palm Springs or Indio to find a place to eat. And

we also looked forward, let's say, to the return of anybody. We'd go down to the highway or the post office was right adjacent to where we established Air, Land and Sea, and that was a place where every morning everybody would come to to pick up their mail. So we'd go and walk out just to visit with people. You know, and say, "What are your plans for today?" And they'd say, "Well, we're going to the beach for the next two weeks," or something so we wouldn't see them, and it was just a little community where everybody knew everybody else and what they were doing. And they'd say, "Well, if you're not doing anything tonight, why don't you come over. We're going to have some hamburgers," or something. Well, I was starving. I mean I was, besides running Air, Land and Sea, I'd open it up in the morning at probably a little after eight, and I'd close it by about noon or one o'clock. And I'd go out and I'd read water meters. I did that every other month. And I used to work as the night auditor at one of the hotels or I would work for the liquor store just to keep myself going. I also, I worked with a carpenter and built cabinets for the homes being put in down here because I've always been clever with my hands. But that's how I subsisted that first

summer. I mean it was just from little odd jobs because Air, Land and Sea was bringing me no money and wouldn't for two years, you know, to subsist on. And a nice thing happened that first summer. I think it was the first summer. I'm almost positive it was because a lady by the name of Henrietta Werter had the Shadow Mountain Terrace. And she wanted to take her granddaughter to Europe, which we arranged for her. And she had a contract with a lady to live there or to take care of the place, but the lady was sort of, you know, she was in and out all the time. And she said there was going to be another lady coming down from the Bay Area who'd been in a tremendous automobile accident and she was coming down by stretcher by ambulance. And would I, you know, since I was going to be there, would I, you know, look in once in awhile and see if she was all right. And I promised her I would because she was the best booking I had had, you know, a booking for Europe for her granddaughter. So on the day of this lady's arrival, I went up to the Shadow Mountain Terrace and I found her. I guess it was the following day because her husband had left. I found her right where I was supposed to find her in her unit, knocked on the door, and she told me to come in. And she

was there in bed. She had some crutches and everything. And I said, "Mrs. Werter asked me if I would check up on you and see if you're all right." I said, "Is there anything I can do for you?" And I identified myself and, "Is there anything you need like groceries or provisions?" And she said to me, I'll never forget, she said, "Can you make a martini?" And I said, "Well," I said, "I never have, but tell me how to make a martini," and she told me, go to the refrigerator, get out the ice and gin and everything. And this was Pat Anderson. And she couldn't walk. And she'd been in this terrible accident, you know. Well, then what I did, she was such a delightful person that what I then did, I introduced, I brought over three other people who during the daytime were free, you know, and that became then our pivotal point for every day to be there at the Shadow Mountain Terrace with Pat. We'd get her out into the pool where she could exercise those legs and everything, you know. And probably the greatest joy of that summer was not only when she began to walk again and be able to get around without crutches and everything, but on her birthday which is, I think, around the second or third week of August, when we threw a big party and she could dance at the party. And that's how

I got to know Pat Anderson. I'm pretty sure it was about fifty-seven. I'm just guessing, you know. But getting back to the community in those days, aside from Cliff, who really was the pivotal man, you know, the push behind the area, Hal Capp and Ted Smith were also here. They were in real estate as well as Edith Eddy Ward, who was known as the First Lady of Palm Desert. But the others like, you know, there was a little Bank of America that had just been established. Bill Franklin was then the new manager. And the reason I remember these names is because there are the ones I had to do dealings with constantly, you know. There were many others. In fact, I was thinking I really should write down names of people that were so vital at this particular time. Of course, naturally, they're gone. We had three doctors here, located already. One was a Dr. Alexander, who had set up a small clinic in the professional building, and he had a suite of three different rooms where he could seat people. He came out here to retire. And he had a heart condition. And the first thing you know he was running "a small clinic in this area." There was Dr. Morey, and then Dr. Seals. But neither, Dr. Morey was the gentleman who made most of the house calls down

here, but Dr. Seals really just wanted to have a little practice, something to go to away from his home. There were none of the golf courses down here at all at that particular time because where Indian Wells is now was the Prong Ranch, where El Dorado is was the Page Ranch. Milt and Betty Page lived there, and Bart Prong lived in the other place. You know, these were young people whom I got to know the first year I was here. And we had a huge reservoir along the highway, just right, you know, where the old site of, this, on the corner over here where the meat, Sunshine Fish place that used to be Angelo's. It was an Italian eating place, bar and stuff like that. Oh, in the first summer I was here, we had tremendous storms. And they washed out all the utility poles and Palm Desert was without electricity for two days. And so we had, I mean, anything we had in our refrigerators, like the old Andrews Market, which is now the Village Market, they lost all their items that were refrigerated. That included, you know, milk, ice cream, meat and everything. We had boulders that came down Portola that would almost crush a car, you know, from the runoff. So this flood situation is nothing

new in the area. So that's how Airlandsea got started. I guess it was a visit in 1956, then moving down here the first week in January of fifty-seven. It's a long question.

PY: Yes.

JK: Long answer.

PY: How long did it actually take for it to get off the ground?

JK: After two years, we still were in a great deal of controversy because even though we had met all the obligations and requirements, the competitor in Palm Springs was giving us an awfully hard time. And they had been there ten years prior to our arrival. And they had a policy of sending a girl down to Indio one day a week or so to take care of the Indio area. And two years later, we still only had the appointments of Bonanza, Pacific and Delta Airlines. Well, Delta only was in the south. Pacific went up and down the coast. And Bonanza serviced in those particular days Phoenix, Palm Springs, Los Angeles, and that was all. Well, they had a flight from L. A. to Las Vegas, I beg your pardon. But in this particular area. And when I say, Palm Springs, it was still Thermal. So after two years, I mean, it was a real

struggle. And I was getting really quite fed up with the whole scene. And we had applied for what they call IATA which is the International Air Travel Authority out of Montreal to be able to write international air tickets. That would be, you know, for anyplace in the world. And up to this time, I mean we did not have one major carrier in this country such as United, American, TWA. We couldn't get them to give us the appointments. And so I was in the, oh, we began doing an awful lot of investigating. We couldn't figure out why, because I would go into Los Angeles twice or three times a month to harass these people because, I mean, we were needing these appointments in order to, you might not understand, every ticket you sell, you go up under commission. Well, you were supposed to keep track of all the tickets that you sold that you paid them totally for. We'd have what we called an exchange coupon. And then eventually once you got your appointment you were supposed to get the retroactive commissions. Well, that was way down the line. And I can remember people telling me, oh, I don't know why you're still out there, you know. We've got a good agent in Palm Springs. Palm Desert doesn't need this, you know. I mean they can drive into Palm Springs and be taken care

of. Well, that was just like waving a red flag under my nose. So through a lot of slip ups we began finding out things that were going on, and possibly we were maybe, I think after two years we did get the IATA. But even with IATA we would, many of the overseas carriers like Lufthanza and Italia and Airlingus would come down and give us the appointments and the ticket stock, but not Pan American, not TWA. And we just, I mean it just got to be too much of a hassle, you know. So we began compiling all kind of data from what we were able to find out, you know, because we were persistent. When I say we, I'm speaking of Faye and myself because it then appeared that John was not ever going to be part of it. And meantime he'd fallen in love with a little stewardess and got married. And we knew, the writing was on the wall, and she didn't like the desert, so then Faye then, actually then took over totally his partnership, although his name still remained, you know, on the books. Anyway, I was going to be in the Midwest, and I made up my mind I was going up to Chicago because we found out that the real culprit of what was holding up our appointment was United Airlines. Now I'm telling you things I possibly could be getting into trouble with, but this is a true

story. And we found this out, I mean, from various people, but also in my visits to the Los Angeles office immediately. The gentleman in charge there, I mean, just couldn't have been more curt or discourteous to me, you know. And I knew it wasn't a conflict of personalities because I've always been able to get along with anyone. So once we had all the data that we needed and the fire and the ammunition in line, I made this trip to Chicago and I went into United Airlines main administration building there at Midway Airport and asked to see the president of the company, Mr. Pat Patterson. Well, of course, you know, being, how shall I say, young and impetuous and angry, you ask for the very top man. And I was told he was not in Chicago. And I said, "Well, who is here?" And they, "Well, one of our vice presidents is here, but he can't see you because he's on his way to Seattle." And I said, "You tell your vice president, whatever his name is, I'm going to sit out here in this lobby until I see him." You know, and I plunked myself down. Gave them my card, and they said, "Where's Palm Desert, California?" (laughter) Well, I was there for probably fifteen minutes, and she kept saying, "I am very sorry, Mr. Johnson cannot see you." And I said, "Well, you can just tell him I'm

staying out here." So finally Mr. Johnson came out with a briefcase under his arm, and he was on his way to Seattle. And, of course, we've laughed about this later because he expected a man, I guess, in his fifties or sixties. I saw this punk kid sitting there not going to move unless I saw him. So he said, "Well, now what is this all about?" So opened my briefcase and I told him that for two and a half or three years that we'd been in Palm Desert and all this other stuff. And then I told him, I said, "We found out that we're being, well, a better word would be blackballed by your agency in Los Angeles because they have put a real barrier and you're auditing the appointments from all the other carriers. I mean they are the ones that said do not recognize this agency." And I discovered that the gentleman who is the main manager in Los Angeles had gone to school with a woman who owned the agency in Palm Springs. And also the fellow at Western Airlines, you know. And it was like we couldn't do anything. I mean they were all, how should they, and they were being very mild. And then I showed him all the things that had happened and the problems we'd had with United Airlines, all that sort of stuff. He said, "I just don't believe you."

And I said, "Well, here it is," you know. And he said, "Well, look, I'm awfully busy," and he said, "I've got to take this flight to Seattle," and he said, "I'll tell you what, though, I'll be in your . . . are you going back to the desert?" And I said, "Yes, I'm taking the flight back." And he said, "I'll be in your office then next Thursday." And I said, "I don't believe you." And he said, "Young man, when I say I'll be in your office next Thursday, I'll be there." I couldn't imagine a vice president of United Airlines coming to my office. So we left, you know, after we'd locked horns. We didn't like each other in that first visit. And I got in the plane and came back and told Faye what I had done. And we didn't really think he'd show up. But sure enough, the following Thursday morning the car pulled up and it was he and his wife, you know. He came inside and both Faye and I were there, so once again we sat down. We gave him the file and let him go through it. He said, "Could I please take this and study it?" And he said, "Where's a good place to have something to eat?" And so we told him about Bob Keedy's little, that's the only place you could eat, Bob Keedy's little soda fountain place where you get a sandwich or something. So Bob and Rosey went over there. And as I understand it, while

they were there and he was looking through the file he walked next door to Edith Eddy Ward's other little office and talked to Charlotte Stewart. And it was one of those magnificent days again and she took him around. And he bought two lots that day. Came back down to my office and said, "May I use your phone?" Called up the man in Los Angeles who'd been so rotten to us, told him where he was. He said, "Get all the tickets stock and all the appointment papers ready." He said, "I'll meet you in this office tomorrow morning at eleven o'clock." And the next morning they came down. They gave us the appointments. The guy was just as white as a sheet. All the ticket stock. Within twenty-four hours we had American, TWA, Pan American, they all came. But it was this one man at United that had caused us all the trouble. And from then on it began to be solvent. But up until that time it was a real struggle. I mean, if it hadn't have been for my "working elsewhere," I would never have stuck it out. You know, if I hadn't have been so stubborn, because everybody told me, "You can't do this in a small community like this. The community won't support you." And yet the minute that we got the appointments from United and all the other appointments, our competition

from Palm Springs opened an office right across the highway from us. So that then began another interesting facet, you know, of our operation. Well, within a couple of years Faye stuck it out, you know, and we were begin . . . we were solved. We were now making some money, you know, but she didn't like to be so tied down. And that was totally understandable. And it was evident that her son was never going to be part of it. And after, she'd gone away every summer. And she said, "Well, now I'll stay this summer. Why don't you plan to take your holiday and I'll stay. Then I'll leave when you return." And so I took off and I returned in, I guess it was mid-August. And she said, "That's it." You know. Planned, I want to get out. And she said, "Plan to phase me out as of the first of the year." Which I did. And so we dissolved the partnership, and I bought her out. And it became then my sole operation. And I won't tell you the figure, but we were doing enough, let's say, to enjoy, let's say, income from it and our travel and everything. But it was under a hundred thousand dollars we were doing a year, quite a bit under. And when I sold, I was doing almost a million and a half a year. And I had two offices going and fourteen women working for me or with me. It

was a real success story. So it took the better part of three years, plus, you know, I mean, most businesses would not have had this problem because in those days there were so many restrictions about a travel agency. It isn't this way any longer. In fact, anybody can open up right next to you. And put in the money and ask for the appointments, and they get it almost automatically and they compete, which is a shame. But in those days the restrictions, and I liked those restrictions when I look back at them now, because it meant that you, yourself, once you got your appointments, you were protected. So Air, Land and Sea also in those early days when Faye was there, in order to promote, she used to have bridge parties in the office. That would be after I had gone out to go to my other job and there was no business. So she set up card tables then had bridge parties. And we did a lot of promotion for the Shadow Mountain Club insofar as bringing down guest lecturers with travel programs. We did a lot of that, you know, for schools and for people in mobile homes, retired things, like we did anything to promote. And did a lot of it in those early days. And then as I then began to move out and take these trips abroad and everything, and, oh,

another wonderful thing happened. Initially, I guess I was only down here a few weeks when I looked up one day and saw Harry Truman. He walked right by my office. And he and Bess were staying with Loren Walgren who was the governor of, or the former governor, of the state of Washington. And after Harry, not because of Harry, but after Harry, Mr. Eisenhower, when Bob McCulla and his group began to build El Dorado, they enticed Ike to come down. They gave him a home. And by this time we were, of course, we were now, we had all our appointments and everything, and the Secret Servicemen came in. And they asked me if I would be interested in handling their travel, you know. Now I couldn't handle the Eisenhowers themselves because the government took care of them and they always came by train. But Mamie requested that I handle her uncle out of Boone, Iowa. And we always handled the children like John and his wife and their children, you know, when they flew back and forth. And we had to be cleared by the Secret Service. And so then we had also we had to bill Washington, you know, for their travel. And that was the beginning of a real nice association with Washington. And from then on, you know, every president, like one time I had to take care of

Konrad Adenauer, his whole group of close to forty when they came through. I guess we took care of every president or the Secret Service until after Kennedy's assassination, even during the Johnson administration. But the clientele that was then built up, you know, down through the years read almost like a Who's Who. There wasn't a person that you didn't hear of, let's say, in either Washington or the entertainment industry or visiting dignitaries that didn't go through the office, you know, because we had, we really built up a great reputation for good service. But it finally got to the place, you know, that I didn't want to take on anymore what we call private accounts because my accounts receivable were just horrendous. I mean, you could have ten to twenty thousand dollars out at a time waiting for people to pay their bills. And I had a new secretary. I won't mention her name because she no longer is around. She's just a dear. And I heard her talking on the phone this one day and she finally said, "Just a second, please." She said, "This lady insists that she wants to set up an account with you, and I told her you just aren't doing that anymore." And I said, "Well, what's her name?" She said, "It's an Mrs. Annenberg." (laughter) And I said, "I'll talk to her." And so I said, "What is?" And so

she told me. I said, "Any time." I said, she didn't know who Mrs. Annenberg was. And that was probably the last of the big accounts that we set up, you know, because we had all the Eisenhower Medical Facility and the College of the Desert, everything we had, you know, that were accounts receivable was always big accounts. But down through the years, well, when I first came to Palm Desert, there was a very dear couple. Their name was Bill Boyd and his wife, Gracie. He was Hopalong Cassidy. And actually it was sort of a shame because he would have done anything for the community, would have participated in anything. In fact, he, slides I gave to Pat Anderson of the first parade in Palm Desert shows Bill Boyd and Harold Smith as sort of, you know, the grand marshals on their horses starting the parade, coming through El Paseo, which was then just nothing. Nothing on either side, you know, just two little flame roads which were not very well improved at the time. But Bill would have done anything to have participated, you know, to help the area grow and yet he was never really called upon. And he loved the community and was loyal to it. And there were many like him of the early people who were down here. But unfortunately he's gone now, as are the many people

whom I've mentioned. Those that established businesses, lasted a year and left.

PY: Why was that?

JK: Well, there was absolutely no reason for them to stay on because they just couldn't make it. I mean, there just was no income. And most of them who started their businesses were hoping, let's say, to support themselves or their families and there was just no way. What I'm saying is, you know, they talk about our area being overbuilt now, and yet in those days there were offices available and they would be rented and within a year they'd be gone and somebody else would be there the next year. It was a very difficult place to make a living. And, well, to give you an idea, even I, I can remember, I wanted to stay in Palm Desert, you know, and work here while I was getting Air, Land and Sea established when I didn't have any income from it. And I went across to the Biltmore Hotel and saw Mrs. Lingo at the time, thinking that I could possibly, you know, be a manager there and maybe live there, cut down my expenses and run it there, you know, at nighttime and go over and open my office and have it there for three or four hours a day. And it seems to me that at that particular time

that she considered my doing it, but she would only pay me, and it seems to me like fifty-five or sixty-five cents an hour. It was incredible! And you couldn't, I mean making ends meet unless you had money when you came here, which I had some, you just couldn't make it. And that's why if a person overextended himself like Eloise little furniture store, that went out within two or three months after I was there. And then also Edith Eddy Ward wanted to pull herself in with, she didn't want to "stay in that place with Vera. She wanted to bring Vera back over to her other office. So Faye and I then took over the lease of the office when we subleased that part that Eloise had the telephone company. And the telephone company put their first little office in there with two ladies. And one was Phyllis Patton who now has or whatever it is there on the corner. And Phyllis and her husband had arrived down here with two little boys at the time, and also as I told you, those are the days that we didn't see hardly any children at all. So when you saw children you just thought it was the greatest thing in the world because, like I say, it was mostly old folks.

Side 2 of 3:

PY: I get from maybe the opposite side of the scale from Barbara Keedy that there were a lot of kids around Shadow Mountain Club.

JK: There were a lot of kids that were "visiting."

PY: Oh.

JK: Okay? And they had a regular marvelous program, and then of course the children came from the whole valley to the club. If their parents were members, their parents may live in Indio or, is that somebody coming in?

PY: Yes. Okay, you were talking about children.

JK: I told you that the Shadow Mountain Club was the focal, pivotal point, you know, for the recreation and also the getting together in the community. And also when I arrived they had a marvelous program. This was during the winter months. For people who did have children in the area, and they had regular, well, things like teaching them to swim, arts and crafts, Lou Keener was in charge of that, as I remember. And the first or second year they brought in a girl, Betty Crocker, Crockett was her name, Crocker, I'm not too sure, Betty is still down here. And, but most of the activity for the children at the club was during that period of time in the winter months,

you know. We did have a small school up here, Washington. Now evidently there were more children I would really realize. I don't remember seeing that many because the reason I say this is another thing that I did do to sustain myself at this particular time, I did work as a substitute teacher. I taught chemistry at the high school in Palm Springs as a substitute basis. And that's why, I would see children, I'd go in there, but there weren't, you were not aware of children down here in Palm Desert at the time. Later on within, well, for instance, a young couple that I met, Bill Doty and his wife Jan, their boy was only a year old at the time. So the children were beginning to show on the scene, you know. And the Pages had a couple of children. And so there were ranches around here that did have, but I guess it was because in the actual little business community you never saw them or rarely saw them was why I made that statement, you know. And Gert's children and Bob's, Barbara was just a little girl, a little toeheaded thing in pigtails at that time. But the Shadow Mountain Club was a family club. And it was a place that you would gravitate to particularly on weekends, you know, for a family. However, right after

Easter everything, they just packed up and left. And there wasn't really that much activity. And people with families usually took off and went to the beach for the summer. Or to the mountains.

PY: So there literally was nothing going on here in the summer?

JK: Nothing. Absolutely nothing. In fact, of an evening and you'd walk out your front door, you know, because it was finally cooling off because most homes here were swamp coolers, desert coolers, and you'd hear people laughing. In fact, sound would carry forever. You'd walk down to see what was going on, who was there. (chuckle) And people would always say, "If you're out, you know, drop in." So it was just, I would say looking back, you know, at the people that would show up at the post office there were probably less than a hundred that would stay in the summertime. The rest were gone.

PY: Is this starting like the sixties that you're talking about?

JK: Well, this was in the fifties. Now as actually incredibly enough you could tell the change every year. I think the biggest change came when they changed the highway because it was just a little two-lane road from Palm Springs

through to Indio. And it was really, the main part of the road was here on the north side. Now immediately to the south of it there was a big ditch, drainage ditch. In other words, in order to get to my office, when you'd pull off the highway you had to go down a ditch and come up and then go into the station or go into the, my area. And that went the whole length of Palm Desert. And it was part of the Flood Control situation we had here at that particular time. The Sun Lodge Colony was there. The Firecliff Lodge was there. And there were a few places like the adobe run by Marilyn and Jim Harstead. The area up around the Shadow Mountain Club was a long way from being developed. They had a, beside the big pool, they had a duck pond, and they had a little small nine-hole pitch and putt around the club. There were a few homes scattered in that area. There was a few nice homes like where the Leonard Firestone home which was where Harold and his wife lived, Harold Smith. But looking at the map right now, I mean if you had a map of 1955-56 you'd see a, you know, that there was really very little here. Even though the Shadow Mountain Club had been started, as I understand, in the late forties. But there hadn't been that much development. And what

there was, in my estimation, was a real gamble and quite speculative in those days. And Palm Springs was charming. And we used to drive into Palm Springs, oh, two or three times a week in the evening. Just, we loved that little community because it was a small community. And there was, whatever activity there was in the desert centered around Palm Springs at that particular time. And Indio was not all that desirable. Indio was a far cry from what it is now today. It's turned out to be a beautiful community, but most of Indio was along the railroad tracks and just off it, you know. And I also, I'll never forget that first summer when those floods came. And we didn't have that much rain in Palm Desert. We got all the flood water. Within a matter of twenty-four hours we had millions of crickets all over the place, and it still does happen, particularly during the summer months. If you have heavy rains, the crickets' eggs hatch out and they come out of the grounds by the millions. And they gravitate toward any light at nighttime, so we had to learn to keep all lights off at night to avoid a total cricket infestation all over. It would be so bad that when you drive in your car in Indio, you know, when they had the street lights and everything, it was just like,

when you pull your brakes, it's like sliding on something. And that can still happen again down here. That is part of the ecology or whatever you want to call it of the desert. Rancho Mirage was just a ride place in the road. There was really nothing there. Desert Aire Hotel was another pivotal place that stayed open all summer. And it was run by a fellow by the name of Hank Gogerty. The White Sun Guest Ranch during the winter was open for guests, and the family had that. But they always closed it up right after Easter, and that was the end of that until the following year. So that was about, those are about the main points of interest where people would go to seek solace from the heat and the monotony of the summer.

PY: Not much, in other words.

JK: You had to find your own entertainment.

PY: That's what we used to do.

JK: Well, it was with friends. And every time I had the opportunity, which wasn't too often, it would usually be on a weekend, I would drive over to the beach with Clancey Lane, I mean Clancey Lane, Clancey Smith. He and his little wife Doris had a beautiful beach home at Capistrano Beach. And that was good. That was

sustaining them for two more weeks. Or we'd go deep sea fishing. We'd go to the mountains hiking, just anything to get away from the terrible heat because now let's go back. There were very few places that had refrigeration. There were mostly swamp coolers. And I had the swamp cooler in my office. And I am not kidding you, almost every day I sat in there by myself just in my swimsuit. And if I saw a person coming near, I had thongs on my feet, I'd put on a shirt before they'd come in. But half the time I would sit in that office during that first summer just in my swimsuit. I mean it was just so humid and hot. With the doors open. You have to have some ventilation going through. And I thought to myself, I've got to be out of my mind. But also I kept myself busy at the typewriter, you know, hacking away all the time, you know, at the airlines and steamship companies for interest. And I used to feel so terribly sorry when they'd send a representative down in the summertime in a coat and a tie dying, you know, and they couldn't believe that we were wanting to locate in a community like this. And yet, you know, I guess being at the right place at the right time is terribly important because it really worked out. I often thought

even the real estate people were really gambling. But there was that potential here all the time. And if you could see that far into the future, you know, and stick it out, you'd be okay. Although many of those people that had property and homes in that particular time, within the next, oh, I'd say, six to ten years sold or got out of it because it was going nowhere. And then all of a sudden when it did boom it just went overnight, as you know, because you've been part of it here the last, how long have you been here?

PY:

JK: Yes, you've seen it. You've seen the biggest boom we've ever had.

PY: When did you notice your clientele changing from the first, you know, few people that came in? Let me say it, did your clientele change or just grow?

JK: Most of the people who came in, well, there was a difficulty on my part, they would refer to me during that first year, most of the community referred to me as the kid. And even though I was thirty years of age, see, I'm fifty-five now, even though I was thirty, they just called me the kid. They thought, of course, when I arrived out here I had a crewcut to begin with and so

I let my hair grow. And I think they didn't really believe that I had the intelligence, let's say, to counsel them properly. In retrospect, I have a little myself and I learned by my mistakes, but I don't think I ever really made a mistake insofar as scheduling or ticketing was concerned. But I can remember the very first time the phone rang and I said, "Good morning, Airlandsea Travel Service," and the first question they ever asked me was, "What month are the mosquitoes bad in Alaska?" And I said, "I understand that they are really at their worst during the months of June, July and August," and I didn't know a thing about Alaska. (laughter) And thank you very much, and that was my first question. Isn't that incredible? Also, you know, one thing that most people don't realize, the average travel agency becomes a real, like an information bureau. And because of the fact that we were, had a large office, and there were a lot of interesting brochures and everything eventually around, people would come in there just to make inquiry or to pass some time of the day and when you were pleasant and when you gave them the time, of course, that's all we had, they would tell their other friends about it, you know. And so the clientele really

I would say after that first summer, the fact that I think we stayed open or I was there all summer long helped. And even when they came back, they found we were still there, we weren't like the other businesses that would go out after the first season, after about the first year and a half, they really began to come in and take interest in what we were doing. And actually, among the various things that I took back to Chicago that I told you about were items from other people who brought in to us through their investigation, you know. And things that they had, they couldn't understand why we couldn't get the ticket stock of TWA or of United or something like that. So they made it a point to investigate it, which was awfully nice on their part. And Bob Hanson was one man that really went out for us. Another fellow was Harry who was our attorney at the time who passed away at much too young. But the clientele really began to come in I would say within a matter of a year after establishment. And also when we explained to them what the circumstance was. We had to try and do our best to get them to ride Bonanza because if they rode Bonanza from Thermal to L. A. and then took a flight from L. A. to New York, we'd get a complete commission right away. As long as they started on Bonanza. And then a wonderful thing happened. Bonanza got the rights to change their

operation, confirm with the Palm Springs, and that meant then we got that much more volume going into Palm Springs, leaving from there going elsewhere, you know. So it began to help not only us but the clients, too.

PY: It sounds like you probably spent a lot of time driving your clients around the country almost.

JK: We didn't drive them, no. But we had to tell them, you know, that this was the unfortunate circumstance. I also worked very close with a girl from Western Airlines, Lucy Ann Dabbott, and she at this particular time was in Western's office at the Desert Inn Hotel. A little tiny cubby hole which was only like this, you know. She told me, "anytime you have a question, just call, John." And these were the days when Western didn't even recognize us. And Lucy Ann was a great help in those early days. And she's still a top person with Western. You may know her. You should interview her.

PY:

JK: Yes. And so, like I say, you know, even though Airlandsea began to get off the ground, the community didn't grow. And there weren't that many more people, but more people began coming to us that were holding off for awhile. And we tried to do various types of promotion. In fact, in

conjunction with the Shadow Mountain Club, we began running buses to the races, Santa Anita. And it didn't make any money for us. If we broke even, we were lucky. But the deal was that we'd leave in the morning, go in, would have the clubhouse. And coming back we'd have dinner at the Shadow Mountain Club that night. It was a package deal. And it was a lot of work for nothing. But it was something to expose the people that we were there for their service. But we did an awful lot of, we just knocked ourselves out just to let the community know we were here. Come in, let us help you. And then it finally got to the place that, let's say within ten years we almost wanted to say, stay away. It just kept growing. And I had to, I mean, after the partnership was dissolved, within, I hired a girl within two weeks. I hired the next one within another two months. And the third one in about another four months. And then I had to keep hiring. It just began to grow like Topsy.

PY: Was the community growing at that time, too?

JK: Eh.

PY: Or were these visitors that you were getting?

JK: Well, both. But the community was growing, yes. Not all that fast, but all of a sudden. People were switching

from our competitor to us. But it was incredible. And we had, I had two people working in the office that had to drive all the way from Palm Springs. And so at night-time when they'd drive back, they'd take us back and deliver them to the client before they went home. And we were doing a great volume. And also, you know, from the Indio area. And this is the time then that we became quite well known for international travel because when I finally had the office to myself, the very first stipulation was that every one of my people had to take orientation tours all the time. And even though I started them out with three weeks' pay vacation a year, we'd usually give them two or three weeks abroad, all expenses paid, so that I was sending them out, if I couldn't go, you see, these orientation tours came up constantly. I would send one girl to Australia. I'd send the next girl to Africa. And, you know, the next one to Europe for awhile. South America. And so as the office began to grow, I had at least one girl out for two or three weeks while the rest were working, you know. So when people would come into the office, if we ourselves hadn't been to that country recently, we'd had somebody that was there and they could tell exactly what was going on,

what to expect, where to shop, and all the other things that they had to know. So that we really became a beautifully integrated office where we could speak authoritatively on any part of the world. And we covered the world during the course of a year. Somebody was always somewhere, which made it marvelous. And that worked out beautifully until the Internal Revenue Service investigated me the last year I was in business. And after going through my books for two weeks, realizing that I hadn't done anything wrong, said to me, from now on you cannot give these people a vacation paid plus pay for their travel on these orientation tours. They've got to pay for that themselves, which I thought was a real ripoff, you know, because they were doing, actually every time they came back, they were that much more enthusiastic about not only selling, but showing and waiting for the next girl to go out and come back and tell her stories, you know. It was a great office, a great operation.

PY: Did you find that the structure of the community changed any. You talked about it being so primarily retirement.

JK: Yes. Well, that all began to change, I think, in my estimation when the College of the Desert came in.

There were more and more people moving down naturally, family people. And that's why George Washington School began to really increase in size. And we only had the Community Church and the Christian Science Church wasn't built at the present location, whether or not before I'm not just too sure. The Catholic church met in what became a laundromat down here. It was just a little tiny building twice the size of this. There was a little Baptist church over here on Avenue 44. We had a playhouse. Clay Sterns, God love him. That was another "source of getting together and the community entering into these various things, you know. Bob and May Hanson were retired vaudevillians, or did you know this. Did May ever tell you this? She was on the vaudeville circuit. And they were very enthusiastic about bringing, let's say, a little playhouse to our area. Palm Springs had the Palm Springs Playhouse, which was really very nice. And they had a resident manager on the staff and they were bringing in a star performer and do usually a play every other week and bring in people like Zazu Pitts or Edward Everett Horton or somebody like that, you know. And it was a combination dinner ahead of time and the playhouse that night. We were hoping to get something like that

established down here. And so since they were my landlords and since they thought I had all kind of extra time, they tried to get me involved with the playhouse. And I did. I guess it was within, the first year I was down here, they wanted to raise money for it and they were going to do three three one-act plays and so I participated in that. And it was fun. And eventually from this they built the community building over here on, outside of Unit 6 where we were up in the mountains. Well, they continued the playhouse for some time. They used to hold it in various empty shop buildings down here like, you know, where Sandra Yoke is or where, let me see, I guess it's where Johnny Johnstone's office is now. That was part of the playhouse at one time. But see, this was part of a community effort. And people who had never had any background in playing and stuff would get involved, which was great. It gave them something to get involved in. And then more and more, I would say, maybe even before the College of the Desert, that used to be the old Dollar Ranch where we used to get all our watermelons all the time and canteloupe. They used to grow them great down there. Young people, I guess maybe they were moving in all the time for various reasons.

And I'm trying to think, you know, Bill Doty was a draftsman and I guess he was doing mostly architectural drafting for buildings and homes. As I understand it, he did the Arowan Hotel down here. And then Ross Patton and wife Phyllis and their two little boys, and Ross was sort of like, he wanted to be a builder and he went to work with Patton and Wild. They combined their forces, and they built many beautiful homes down here and buildings. Duke Wild, Ross Patton, and they were here, I'm sure, in fifty-seven, fifty-eight, somewhere in that area because I remember one time June and Rolland Harstead had a party, I guess it was the second summer I was here, at the Adobe. And looking back now all they had there were all young couples, but their children were all young, too. I mean their children would all be under the age of ten, so they were coming in within those two years. But I didn't really notice a big change, you might say, in the area even though Indian Wells Country Club was established in El Dorado until the College of the Desert went in. And that was really a total change for the community insofar as bringing in more people.

PY: Did the community seem, the community and then to the valley, did it seem isolated from the rest of southern

California, particularly L. A.? Did they venture out to go to L. A. that you

JK: Yes. I'll tell you why you had that feeling down here, because for instance if you had television, it was really no good. You could put up a huge antenna and you might be lucky enough to pick up some decent reception but not a whole lot. And we didn't really have good communication in the television industry until Able Cable came in with the cable. Now down toward or over toward Bermuda Dunes and Palm City and down toward Indio you could get better reception because you were further away from the mountains. But right in this area here and Palm Springs you just, so we felt isolated. Radio was our chief source of communication rather than television. Activities, you had to go out of the valley, aside from during the winter months if you wanted to go up to Palm Springs and go to the Chi Chi and see a show or to the Palm Springs Playhouse and see a play or something. But most of the activities centered around the Shadow Mountain Club and their activity, you know, like dinner dances or Chamber installation or mayor's breakfast or something like that.

PY: Okay. We were talking about the sense of isolation

here and why it occurred.

JK: Well, isolation only insofar as, it was a very small desert community. I never felt isolated in the complete terminology or definition of that word because there were people around here that were always very friendly and close. So I didn't really feel that isolated. And mind you, prior to coming here, I had lived in St. Andrews in Scotland for two years, which is a very small community. And I loved that as opposed to a large city like Los Angeles, which I never cared for. And the only other outlet, like I say, feeling of "being out of contact with everybody else was the fact that you could not get television. And I'd begun to enjoy it, you know, in the early fifties and had a television set down here and gotten the thing by waves. Or sound sometimes. And you were rather frustrated, you know. Until, even when I got a giant antenna I was getting a little bit better reception, but it was not, you really felt like you were out in the boonies someplace.

PY: So these TV stations didn't come in until later?

JK: No, see, with the cable, with them putting up the various things on those mountains up here, we got excellent reception. When the cable moved in, Able Cable, it was

a Godsend because then you felt like you were in communication with the rest of the world aside from the radio.

PY: Other people have stated that the road, who was actually saying that the road between here and L. A. was bad enough that it really was a major project to get anywhere like San Diego or to L. A.

JK: Yes. San Diego was always easier because the, bye, Tom, because Highway 74 was always as it is right now. And you could go over, you know, by way of the Anza area and then go across to Temeculah and down through 95, and it's always been like this. And San Diego is no problem. But going to L. A. the freeway did not exist then. And so after you left, you had to go through Palm Springs by the way, and after you left Palm Springs you had to go through Cabazon and Beaumont and Banning, and all these little communities. And Redlands. In other words, I think what Faye is saying is, the stagnation of going through these little communities at fifteen, twenty miles an hour is what really held you back , and so your trip to Los Angeles would be over a three hour trip usually. Whereas nowadays you can breeze in in less than two hours because of the freeway or the

Interstate 10. And that also actually is, say something very quickly and get off of it. If you ever get the chance to go back and go through the Desert Sun publications I'd say twenty-two or twenty-three years ago, the Highway Commission wanted to reroute Highway 111 out of Palm Springs, you know, going . . . (buzzer) They wanted to reroute Highway 111 away from Palm Springs because it went straight down Palm Canyon, through Palm Springs and then came through all the little cove community cities. And we had the opportunity at this particular time of, they wanted the other communities to approve this one. We were all for it to move the highway over where it would circle, go around the airport in Palm Springs and come along the area where it wouldn't interfere with the normal flow of the water from San Geronio Mountain. And they were going to put in a freeway system with access road coming off to each one of the little communities which would mean that we could go out just beyond where the wash is, get on the freeway and head straight north into L. A. which would have been marvelous for us all. However, Palm Springs was incorporated and so was Indio. Indio couldn't care less, but Palm Springs and all the merchants fought it and said

no way did they want a situation whereby people could bypass Palm Springs to go to the other little communities. And that's why we kept lll going straight down Palm Canyon, and it's been a nightmare to even Palm Springs. But I mean we wanted it so bad. It would have made it so much easier, and yet I suppose I must respect the fact that we can go out Bob Hope Drive and then hopefully eventually Monterey. Get out on Interstate 10, it doesn't make any difference. And this is a terrible thing to say. I was asked just the other day by some people who were visiting here from the east how often did I go into Palm Springs. And I said, aside from getting on the plane, rarely. There's no reason for going into Palm Springs anymore. And when I do, I'm not really that happy about shopping there. It just, that whole marvelous little community has changed so tremendously. I prefer what we have in Palm Desert right now. Another thing down through the years, I mean immediately on arriving in Palm Desert and starting my office I was approached to join the Chamber of Commerce. I don't really remember at this particular time what the dues were, but they couldn't be much. I'm guessing maybe twenty-five dollars. I don't really remember. So within, I guess it was in

February of 1957, I went to my first Chamber of Commerce meeting. And at that particular meeting there was Edith Eddy Ward and Henrietta Werder and Jeannette Constantino, she was our secretary, and Hal Capp and Cliff Henderson and Phil Franklin, the Bank of America, and myself. And that was the meeting as I remember. And I've always been taught to listen. You could learn more by listening. And since I was brand new to the community, this is what I was doing. And all the things that they brought up were very vital to them at the time. They were trying to promote and establish and help get this community off the ground. And the Chamber of Commerce, they were talking about the possibility of hiring a manager. And the next question was, how do we pay them, you know. I mean, there were no funds. And I don't know, I mean, we began to ramble from one thing to another. And by the way, our meeting was held in Cliff Henderson's old "shopping center. And it was such an eyesore you couldn't believe it. I had also prior to arriving out here in southern California stopped off in Scottsdale, Arizona, which became Scottsdale. And I began talking that day, wouldn't it be wonderful, you know, I mean this was a planned community of the future. That's what the billboard said.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had, you know, some kind of an ordinance whereby all the new buildings that went up would have to be Spanish or Mediterranean. And I can remember that could never be that way. You're just too many years ahead of yourself. And those are too expensive to build. I can remember that very first meeting I brought that up. And that was my only contribution, and I was hooted down because there wasn't one, aside from Angelo's, which had sort of a Spanish feeling to it over here, there wasn't one building that had tile roof that I remember down here. And the first one that went in years later, it was on El Paseo, was John Luman put up that building which is now called the Bromley Building, and that was our first tile roof building, to my knowledge, you know. Well, another place that was a great place for me to escape to down here, I've always loved art, an art picture and things, I used to go over here to the old Desert Museum and used to have the most marvelous shows of desert artists, you know. And it was always cooler inside there.

PY: The Gallery?

JK: The Gallery.

PY:

JK: And I used to go in there and lose myself for an hour,

just going through it, just to get away, just to remember that there was a thing or there is a thing called culture around someplace, but you've got to look for it. The winters weren't that bad. The winters were delightful out here. There was nobody around, or very few people. And you can walk to work and back, you know. In fact, you can cross the highway any time and never feel like you'd ever get hit because there wasn't that much traffic. But those were the early years.

PY: Did you think a lot of people around here were more community minded then than there seems to be now?

JK: Well, I think that's a hard question to answer because I really believe that people are always this way. They are community minded, but when you're in a very, very small community you have no choice but get involved. But as the community grows, well, let somebody else do it. Understand? And we all served. I served four years on the board of directors of the Chamber of Commerce like before our city hall, administration type of thing, you know. And we all were really dedicated. You had to be to get up at seven o'clock and be at seven-thirty meeting once a week, you know, and really hash out all the difficulties that we had here in that community at that

particular time. And there were, there have been down through the years really some great people who were totally unselfish, who gave of themselves, their time and everything. Because they loved "Palm Desert. Long before it was even ever thought about by anybody else. And we had a terrible time getting what we would call a date line anyplace, you know. It was always Palm Springs. It was always Eisenhower in Palm Springs, and by the way in those days where El Dorado Country Club is is Palm Desert. Where Eisenhower Medical Facility is is Palm Desert. It was all Palm Desert at one time. Bob Hope Drive which in those days was Rio Del Sol was the dividing line for Palm Desert and Rancho Mirage. So when you go up Bob Hope Drive now everything on the right was Palm Desert and everything to the left was Rancho Mirage. When you went all the way down here to Washington, that was all Palm Desert. See, that's why, you look up there at Palm Desert Country Club, it's still called Palm Desert Country Club even though it's getting very close to, it should be in Indian Wells right now. And if we hadn't have had, and this is really tragic, selfish interests by certain groups of people down here, Palm Desert would have been incorporated long before Rancho

Mirage or Indian Wells. And we would have a much larger area of expansion and a better city. And we would have had, there would not have been an Indian Wells. There would have been a nice medical facility in Rancho Mirage because for years it had a Palm Desert address. It's really very tragic as far as I'm concerned. For those of us who have lived here all these years.

PY: You were talking earlier about the Page Ranch, knowing them and the other ranch.

JK: Prong.

PY: Prong.

JK: Yes.

PY: I've heard a little about those families with the ranches.

JK: Okay. The only Prong that is left, in fact if you ever go down to Indian Wells they have Mr. Prong's portrait, it's a painting there in the clubhouse, and his son, I don't know where Bart is now. I have no idea. His name is Bart Prong, but I arranged his honeymoon almost fifteen, sixteen years ago, and when they bought the property from his father and turned it into the Indian Wells Country Club, Bart stayed here for a couple of years and then he took off. I have no idea where he is. Now Milt and Betty Page, their ranch was turned into El Dorado

Country Club. And they moved over to the coast. I think it was in the area of Santa Barbara. I'm not too sure. And they came down once or twice after that because they were a part of that young group with young children at the time. Their kids would be married now, all of them, you know. So I have no idea, but you could do, in fact, it might be interesting to do a little bit of a history on those two families. Like, you know, the Malone Ranch was recently tore up for this new Desert Horizons Country Club down here. Mrs. Malone's, is it Malone? Yes, is still around.

PY: Is that the old Arkell one or that's next to it?

JK: It's next to it.

PY: And it has nothing to do with Jerry Malone?

JK: Oh, no. Just a second. This is Malone. Here's little Ann, just a second. I may have the wrong name. But it's where Desert Horizons Country Club is being put in. Begins with an N though.

PY: Well, I can find out.

JK: Okay, fine. Isn't that terrible.

PY: Have the Pages and the Prongs been here for quite awhile?

JK: Yes. Yes, you see it was, both of those were working ranches, citrus, date, and grape ranches. And to have

watched all those being tore out and all that development going down there was something else.

PY: Why do you think they sold it?

JK: Good time to sell when they did sell. I mean they were young and they could go elsewhere. And their families were just emerging. And the desert, well, most likely, you know, they possibly have, I don't really know, but I would suspicion they have been possibly brought up down here and maybe they had had the desert by that time. You'd be amazed the second generation that took off, didn't stay. The parents pioneered and their kids just took off. They said you can have the desert. I think it was because in those days there wasn't the comfort that we know and realize nowadays. Or the activity or the things to do. They were probably totally bored.

PY: You were talking about a reservoir up in the mountains.

JK: Yes, the reservoir was a water reservoir down here which turned into a swimming pool in the summertime. And that would have been put in, oh, it was there before World War II because . . .

PY: We were talking about the reservoir.

JK: Oh. It was constructed prior to World War II. It was really, it was classified as being in Palm Village long

before Palm Desert. And I understand that during World War II the troops were here, they were here, you know, with General Patton, used it as a swimming pool, as did people use it as a swimming pool. Now it was only tore down I'd say in the early sixties, and so it was a big eyesore along the highway all during that early time, four or five or six years when I was first here.

PY: Where was it?

JK: It was immediately west of where Sunshine Meat and Fish is, between there and the Biltmore Hotel, in that area. And it's like a big concrete thing, you know, all full of water all the time. It possibly, I don't really know, why don't you get with somebody with the water district? They could probably tell you. It probably belonged to them. I believe at that particular time in those early days we had I think three different water companies down here. And one thing about it though utilities and everything were so reasonable. For years my average water bill was three dollars, no matter how much I watered, you know. It was incredible. That's all changed. As more people moved in, more pools, and the only other place, well, when the Shadow Mountain Club was built with that beautiful pool, we all went swimming there. But as

more homes were built and most people built pools, then there was no reason, of course, I don't ever remember really seeing anybody swim in that reservoir. It had to have been done prior to my getting here. There are still, you know, concrete slabs down here where Patton's troops were located. And they will soon be gone. I'll show you here on the map where they are if you want to take a look at it.

PY: Well, they just took some of them in Shadow Cliff Colony. Where was the shopping center you were talking about that Cliff had put together?

JK: When you, here where the Alcaball Liquor Store is.

PY: Well, that's down on 111.

JK: Yes. Now across the street and they just put a whole new building complex, it's just a little bit west of where the Market Basket is, on that side. And it consisted of, it was U-shaped and there were former barracks that had been put in there with, where he got the windows all, everything's sort of mismatched. And when I moved down here, we had a little Chamber of Commerce office in there. Also, it seems to me like there was a dress shop. There was an antique place, a bakery that served coffee. And then eventually a fellow by the name of Jim Griffin put

in the Sand Ho Carpet Company there. He was there for about a year and a half before he left. And it always looked so junky. You couldn't believe. As compared to the other little patio shops that the Hansons had put in.

PY: Was there anything on El Paseo?

JK: Yes. There was a building down there that had been a garage. It was a concrete block building, a real eyesore. It is where the Clothes Horse is now. And the concrete block was that gray color with a great big door you could pull a truck into. That was the garage. The Sun Lodge Colony was along El Paseo there. But across from it, that was all empty land except on the empty land where the Market Basket Shopping Center is, was where we had our post office and a little place called El Besame Mucho, a little eating place, Mexican. Run by a Yugoslavian. Her name was Olga. You should interview her. She is, oh, she's fascinating. You'd love her. I mean, she's still down here.

PY: What's her last name?

JK: Oh, I don't know. Olga. But I'll find out for you. Pat knows her real well, Pat Anderson. Then going along El Paseo, no, we had, oh, we had the fire station. It's always where it's been located. It sat there all by itself

long before the old sandpipers around it.

And right outside my door on a telephone pole was our fire, oh, siren. And anytime there was a fire, the whole community down here, that siren would go off and you couldn't hear a thing inside the office. And it was all volunteer and all volunteer men would leave their job and get in their cars and call in to find out where the fire was and I'll head to go put it out. Because we only had one man in the fire station manning the truck. Wild, you know. And if a person, I can remember, I did two years of medicine at the University of St. Andrews, and within less than a year after I was here, Dr. Alexander and his wife found out about it. And since he had the largest medical office here, he said to me, "Have you ever had any work in hospitals?" And I said, "Yes, you know, for two years." And wanted to know if I would assist him, you know, in case of an emergency. And I said, "Oh, sure, just give me a call." And sure enough, within a week, we had a terrible accident here in lll and the nearest hospital was Indio or Palm Springs. So they brought the people right into his office and his wife called me. I went over there and I helped prep and while he heated the suturing and everything, you know,

and this was our, we were emergency clinic before. We could send people to the hospital in Indio or Palm Springs. Those were rough days.

PY: How long did that go on?

JK: Well, doctor died in sixty-five. By that time we had the Eisenhower Medical Facility pretty well under way. He'd also stopped because his Parkinson's condition began to get quite pronounced. But emergency cases were always handled by any doctor here. They would take them right away just to get them to a hospital, you know. And we even in those early days would have some horrible accidents down here. There has always been a problem of people in the desert overdrinking. That's understandable because of boredom and monotony. When I arrived here, I couldn't even drink, but in two years I could hold my own with anybody. But it was because, it was also a cocktail city, even though a lot of people objected . . .

Side 3 of 3:

JK: Highway 111 used to hug the mountains where they're building those five new restaurants. The first one, the Rusty Pelican, the road used to come, used to hug along the mountain there by where Molar's Nursery is now, and used

to come out in the area about Sandpiper's now begins. And where there used to be a beautiful entrance to Palm Desert, palm trees with a stone wall built up saying, you know, Palm Desert with flowers planted around all the time. It was very attractive. But the highway going around made two curves before it hit up into Rancho Mirage. And I came around eleven o'clock one night and here a car had just left the highway and had climbed up the mountain, you might say. And the police were behind it and they were jumping out of the car, and then the car started back down the mountain, you know. And so the two policemen and myself ran up because there's nothing but boulders there and the car looked like it was totally demolished. And sitting in the car was a man and a woman, the woman had been driving, and the man was out. And the woman was sitting there crying, and they were both so drunk that neither one were hurt. And she was crying, and she was a woman in her sixties or seventies, crying, "I want my Mama," you know. And this was really my first realization that more people drink down here than I realized, you know. Because this was summertime, they were totally bored, they were smashed, there was nobody on the highway, yet they climbed a

mountain. And down through the years, naturally, why it has become a real social area. And if you talk to most of the people who are in, work in hospitals or doctor's offices, all you you this is a real problem.

PY: You were saying that there's a real cocktail set around here.

JK: Well, that is about the only thing they did early in the evening. It was just one cocktail party after another. This was during those early years when they had nothing else to do. I don't want to give the inference that all people were drinking because they weren't, but this was part of the way of, let's say, spare the monotony of the time. A lot of people came down here to get lost. Oh, we had a lot of freaky people down here in those early days. We had people that came down and started their own religious sects or health food nut people. I can remember two little ladies came in my office one day, and I could hardly stand to take care of them because they just reeked of garlic. I mean, it was just awful! And both looked like they needed a good square meal. They were so terribly skinny. And this man and his wife had started this health food place down here. And one of the conditions, one of the stipulations was in order to

get back to good health, you had to drink a gallon of garlic water a day. And they'd both been there for two or three weeks. And one lady said she'd been cured of cancer and the other lady had been cured of tuberculosis. They both looked like they were dying of malnutrition. And I had to book them to take a flight back to Chicago, and I felt awful for the poor people who was going to be on the plane with them. And they swore by this guy. Well, he was eventually arrested and run out of the country. But we also had, hardly a day went by in the desert in those early days that you didn't get some really kooky person coming in promoting something, you know. I mean, really way out. We were, you might say, in the pits at that time for freaky people. And, of course, that changed. That was the first two or three years I was down here. They came to the desert to find themselves. Or to establish something new. I'd almost forgotten about that. And they'd come in with quite a pitch, you know. And I'll never forget, this little old lady came in and I don't know, the reason I remember her because of her name. And her pitch was, "Is your antenna plugged in?" And she was establishing a religion which dealt with the alca and outer space, you know, with

vibrations from outer space and all this type of stuff, you know. And so I would naturally give them the time of day because I had nothing but that to give. I wasn't going to be discourteous, but I had never been subjected to so many really weird people in my life. And they never lasted; they just passed through. And where they've gone, who knows, you know. It was, yes, isolated. It never was boring. Monotonous, but never boring. There was always something new during the day. And then by evening time, you had a chance to share it with somebody else and laugh about it. There were a lot of good people that were here.

PY: Do you think this good commune spirit today is the same?

JK: It could be. I'm not really that much aware of it.

Today I have a feeling though that it's more oriented around individuals, their family, their clubs, their interests, like some play tennis, some play golf, some are involved with families. I still think there's a strong community feeling. I think that has been born out in the election the other day. Really, I was delighted at the turnout of the voters. Now many people were disappointed. I was delighted. They are interested in what is happening to their community is what I'm trying

to say. And they are very vocal on certain things such as flood control, naturally, because they're involved. The new situation with the highway which I'm sure will be resolved, you know. More is coming into this area that is going to keep them here year round. This actually has now become, in my estimation, a year round community. Sure, they'll leave for certain times during the year to be away, but for the most part there are more permanent people now than there have ever been. And they are shopping locally and supporting the community. But, yes, I do think there's a lot of community interest, involvement and spirit yet. Also, for what it's worth, with the advent of Mr. Eisenhower arriving here, Palm Desert finally began being, to become not only in this country but all over the world. And particularly now in places like Scotland because of its golf. I was in Budapest or Bucharest and in Rumania, and I happened to mention California, Palm Desert, and they knew exactly where it was. And I said, it really took Eisenhower staying here to put Palm Desert, to give it a byline around the world. That was the beginning in my estimation. Prior to that time it was always a Palm Springs address. And down through the years, as much as I dearly love Bob and

Dolores Hope, it still burns me when they talk about, you know, the Bob Hope Desert Classic in Palm Springs. It's just always been a little thing that turns the wrong way in my tummy because nine-tenths of the time they are in this area. Now it's Indian Wells, La Quinta, Rancho Mirage, but it shouldn't be a Palm Springs date line, some very fiercely defending Palm Desert all the time. I think we should have our recognition. We've worked hard for it. And those of us that have been here a long time want it, you know.

PY: You deserve it.

JK: I think so.

PY: Is there anything else we haven't covered?

JK: I can't think so. I'm sorry that, there are many people who I will deal this, I'll go through that box and you will get all this. Most of the things that I'm taking from my scrapbook are ads and stuff like that, or anything that pertains, and there will be probably half a box of stuff left over which would be interesting to the historical, hysterical, society. (laughter) But stop and think of it. In less than twenty-five years every president of this country, save for the present one, has vacationed here. If Kennedy hadn't have been assassinated,

Bing Crosby's home in the Ironwood area would have been the winter White House. Kennedy made three trips out here and absolutely loved this place. Bing turned his home over to Kennedy while he was here, you know. That, to me, was a double tragedy because, I mean, if the assassination hadn't taken place and we would have had the winter White House in Palm Desert, look at the, and this was even before Indian Wells and Rancho Mirage was incorporated. Look what we could have had. I mean, of course, you know, I'm speaking like a person that wished it could have been the other way and yet as Robert Burns, the poet, said, the best laid plans of mice and men often

But not only to have met, but to have known, so many of these former first people of our country, and the marvelous association with the celebrities, the others who are heads of corporations or visitors from overseas. For instance, like I mentioned, Konrad Adenauer and Prince Philip when he comes over. And we had people, my clientele also included people who owned vast corporations in Sweden, like and stuff like that. It was an incredible little community for them all to gravitate toward and vacation here. And they, the people, never knew they were here. Like twice this woman

bugged me, two seasons in a row, she'd come in, she wouldn't talk to anybody, she'd keep her back to everybody until I was free. Then occupy my time for ten, fifteen, twenty minutes, ask me all these questions, very weird, I thought, you know. Finally I said to her, after the last time I saw her, I said, "Do you mind," I said, "can I please have your name because there's some things here that you've asked me for which I can send to you," so she finally gave me her name. And I said, "Well, where do you stay?" And she said, "La Quinta Hotel." And her name was Mary Brown. So I knew the manager at La Quinta, so I finally had the chance to call down there. I said, "Who is Mary Brown?" And he laughed and he said, "John, that's Greta Garbo." And I hadn't a clue, you know. So I have been exposed to more people in a short a period of time that I have enjoyed. And in many cases, I mean, I still retain their friendships because first of all I could give them service, secondly, won't you drop in, you know, for a bite to eat. Thirdly, the first thing I knew I'd gotten involved with them and their family. And now that I've been retired for almost eight years or so, I see them still constantly. These are friends. So it's been a very unique experience, you know, for a person

to have decided to locate here when everybody else told me I had rocks in my head. There was no reason in the world for ever staying in a place like this twenty-five years ago, but I've thoroughly enjoyed it.

PY: That's what's important.

JK: So.

PY: Okay.

JK: That's about it, Pat.

PY: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW